

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 263397

LIMDIS

FOLLOWING IS REPEAT TANANARIVE 1678, SENT ACTION SECSTATE,
INFO PARIS 19 OCT 76:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 1678

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PDIP, US, MA

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH RATSIRAKA'S DIRECTOR OF CABINET

REFS: (A) TANA 1673 (NOTAL) (B) 1627, (C) 1622

SUMMARY. DIRECTOR OF CABINET CALLED CHARGE TO HIS OFFICE AND
STATED THAT GDRM REGRETS RECENT TURN OF EVENTS IN OUR
RELATIONS AND HOPES WE CAN FIND MEANS TO RESOLVE OUR PROBLEMS.
HE SAID THAT GDRM WAS PREPARED TO COMPROMISE RE NASA ISSUE
(REFS B & C) AND THAT IT IS INTERESTED IN PURCHASING
HERCULES AIRCRAFT. COMMENT: GDRM APPARENTLY WILL NOT
FURTHER RETALIATE IN RESPONSE TO US ACTIONS, FROM WHICH IT
APPARENTLY RECEIVED OUR CLEAR MESSAGE. END SUMMARY.

1. GEORGES SOLOFOSON, PRESIDENT'S DIRECTOR OF CABINET,
ASKED ME TO SEE HIM MORNING OCT 19. HE OPENED BY STATING
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THAT HE (PRESUMABLY RATSIRAKA AS WELL) REGRETTE THE DEVEL-

OPMENTS THAT LET TO USG ACTIONS TAKEN LAST WEEKEND. GDRM ACTIONS, HE DECLARED, WERE JUSTIFIABLE BUT HE DID NOT ATTEMPT TO OVERPLAY THEM, ESPECIALLY WHEN I RETORTED THAT ACCUSATIONS WERE COMPLETELY FALSE. HE SAID GDRM WAS PREPARED TO STRIVE SINCERELY FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RELATIONS AND HE REFERRED TO MY CONVERSATION OCT 7 WITH FOREIGN MINISTER RAKOTOMAVO (REF B), DURING WHICH TIME WE DISCUSSED POSSIBILITY OF RESOLVING NASA ISSUE.

2. SOLOFOSON SAID GDRM WOULD BE EAGER TO FIND COMPROMISE SOLUTION TO NASA ISSUE, SPECIFICALLY THAT SETTLEMENT BE REACHED RE RENT FOR PERIOD 1973-75. HE SAID THAT THERE SHOULD BE SOME PAYMENT FROM USG, BUT THAT MAGNITUDE OF PAYMENT SHOULD BE NEGOTIABLE. ABOVE ALL, HE STRESSED, IT IS NOT THE MONEY BUT THE PRINCIPLE.

3. IN REPLY, I SAID THAT I HAD REPORTED MY CONVERSATION WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO WASHINGTON BUT HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY REACTIONS. I SAID THAT AS OF THE TIME I LEFT WASHINGTON ONE YEAR AGO, NASA WAS NOT PREPARED TO PAY ONE CENT IN RENT FOR PERIOD 1973-75 BUT, SPEAKING ON PERSONAL BASIS, IF USG COULD BE CONVINCED THAT GDRM WAS SINCERELY WILLING TO TREAT US ON EQUAL BASIS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AND TO IMPROVE RELATIONS IN SUBSTANCE AS WELL AS IN FORM, THERE MIGHT BE BETTER REACTION ON PART OF USG. WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN SEEING LESS HOSTILITY FROM GDRM AND ITS OFFICIALS, CONCERNING WHICH I MENTIONED RADIO MADAGASCAR' ANTI-US COMMENTS AND OTHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ITEMIZED REF A.

4. SOLOFOSON APPEARED TO COMPREHEND THE ISSUES INVOLVED AND ADDED, AS WE HAVE HEARD BEFORE FROM MFA OFFICIALS, THAT NASA ISSUE REMAINS PRIMARY OBSTACLE TO IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS AND MUST BE REMOVED AS AN ISSUE. HE SAID THAT IN REGARD TO THE SMALL ANNOYANCES THAT BOTHER THE USG, IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THE PRESIDENCY TO CONTROL ALL OFFICIALS ON A DAILY BASIS. I POINTED OUT THAT WHAT IS NECESSARY IS A BETTER EXPRESSION OF ATTITUDE TOWARD THE US FROM THE PRESIDENCY WHICH WOULD SERVE AS A GUIDE FOR OTHER GDRM OFFICIALS, A POINT WHICH HE ACCEPTED AND CONFIDENTIAL

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IMPLICITLY TRIED TO ASSURE ME WOULD BE THE CASE IN THE FUTURE.

5. AS WE WERE CLOSING THE CONVERSATION, SOLOFOSON REMARKED THAT GDRM WAS INTERESTED IN PURCHASING ONE OR TWO HERCULES AIRCRAFT. I SAID THAT I WAS AWARE OF GDRM'S INTEREST BUT MADE NO OTHER COMMENT.

6. SOLOFOSON AND I WILL BE LUNCHING OCT 21 AND IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF SOME OF WASHINGTON'S PRELIMINARY REACTIONS COULD BE RECEIVED BY THEN.

7. COMMENT: DESPITE MY RECENT HARDLINE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GDRM, I BELIEVE SOLOFOSON WAS SINCERE IN TRYING TO RESTORE BALANCE TO US-MALAGASY RELATIONS, EVEN THOUGH BECAUSE OF ULTERIOR MOTIVES. THEY OBVIOUSLY WANT SOMETHING FROM US: TO BUY THE HERCULES AIRECRAFT AND/OR OTHER THINGS LATER ON. I THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT DESPITE MY EARLIER SUGGESTIONS, WE SHOULD (A) NOT MAKE ANY PREMATURE NEGATIVE DECISIONS RE EXIM BANK FINANCING OR EXPORT LICENSE FOR HERCULES AIRCRAFT, AND (B) GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION AS TO HOW TO GO ABOUT RESOLVING NASA ISSUE ON THE PRESUMPTION THAT THE GDRM SINCERELY WISHES TO IMPROVE RELATIONS.

8. I DO NOT BELIEVE IT WAS EASY FOR SOLOFOSON, ON RATSIRAKA'S BEHALF, TO COME FORWARD WITH HIS FRIENDLY, REASONABLE PRESENTATION IN EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, NOTWITHSTANDING THEIR ULTERIOR MOTIVES. WE HIT THEM WITH TWO STRONG BLOWS LAST WEEKEND AND THEY GOT OUR MESSAGE. ON THAT BASIS, WE SHOULD STRIVE TO FIND GROUNDS FOR SETTLEMENT RATHER THAN EXACERBATE RELATIONS FURTHER BY REFUSING TO LOOK FOR COMPROMISE SOLUTION. RATSIRAKA WILL NEED TO SAVE FACE, AND WE SHOULD PROVIDE HIM SOME ROOM FOR MANEUVER. SHEINBAUM UNQUOTE. ROBINSON

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